

The background features a stylized landscape. The top portion consists of several overlapping, semi-transparent green mountain peaks of varying heights and shades. Below the mountains is a wide, bright yellow field that has a slightly textured, grainy appearance. The bottom edge of the yellow field is irregular, with some darker green shapes peeking through, suggesting a horizon line or a field of tall grass.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

Richard Louv



Sharing Childhood Experiences in Nature

Nature-Deficit Disorder

- Alienation from nature
- Lure of television, computers, organized sports, and structured/supervised activities
- Lack of leisure time
- Irrational fears of crime and kidnapping
- Poor access to and shrinkage of natural play places
- Modern educational practices, e.g. testing

Benefits of Exposure to Nature

- Improved physical and emotional health
- Heightened sensory skills
- Learn by doing (treehouse example p. 85)
- Nurtures creativity and spatial intelligence
- Enhances outcomes in other academic disciplines
- Seeds of adult environmental stewardship

Criminalization of Play

- Bogeyman Syndrome Redux (stranger danger)
- Need to know where kids are at all times
- Community restrictions
- Fear of litigation

Nature & ADHD

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder due in part to overstimulation and stress
- Nature as prevention and therapy

Implications for Parents and Educators

- Experiential, environment, and place-based education
- Importance of natural history education, school gardens, school redesign
- Time for unstructured play in natural settings
- Get to know your neighbors
- Employ technology

Links to Higher Education

- Students come to college without significant experiences in nature
- Students lack knowledge originally taken for granted, e.g. how does a pump work?
- Ecological design intelligence (David Orr), p. 223-226
- Sense of wonder and joy
- Resurrection of natural history education

Sustainability Book Club

- Bill McKibben (livable communities and back to the land movement)
- Tom Friedman (family experiences with nature)
- Michael Pollan (school gardens)
- Jonathan Safran Foer (Do fish have feelings?)
- Peter Senge (environmental experiences for corporate CEOs)
- Bill McDonough (annual Iceland trip)

Critiques

- Does Richard Louv say anything new?
- Anecdotal evidence – obesity, intelligence, creativity, ADHD, activism
- Narrow audience: Middle-class, white parents living in California?
- Repetitive

Discussion